

## **ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Federal Agency Name(s):** National Ocean Service (NOS); National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); U.S. Department of Commerce

**Funding Opportunity Title:** NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program - International Grant

**Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement

**Funding Opportunity Number:** NOS-IPO-2007-2000794

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s):**  
11.463 - Habitat Conservation

**Dates:** Pre-applications must be received by NOAA by 11:59 p.m., U.S. Eastern Time, on **Monday, November 13, 2006**. Final applications must be received by NOAA by 11:59 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time, on **Friday, March 2, 2007**.

**Funding Opportunity Description:** The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program, as authorized under the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, provides matching grants of financial assistance for international coral reef conservation projects. The Program solicits proposals under four funding categories: 1) Promote Watershed Management in the Wider Caribbean, Brazil, and Bermuda; 2) Regional Enhancement of Marine Protected Area Management Effectiveness; 3) Encourage the Development of National Networks of Marine Protected Areas in the Wider Caribbean, Bermuda, Brazil, Southeast Asia, and the South Pacific; and 4) Promote Regional Socio-Economic Training and Monitoring in Coral Reef Management in the Wider Caribbean, Brazil, Bermuda, the Western Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, the South Pacific, and Southeast Asia. Each funding category has specific applicant and project eligibility criteria.

### **FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT FOR INTERNATIONAL CORAL REEF CONSERVATION GRANTS**

#### **I. Funding Opportunity General Description**

##### **A. Program Objective**

Pursuant to the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (Act), the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary), through the NOAA Administrator (Administrator), and subject to the availability of funds, is authorized to provide matching grants of financial assistance for coral reef conservation projects through the Coral Reef Conservation Program (Program). As such, the objective of the Program is to provide financial assistance for coral reef conservation projects

consistent with the Act and “A National Coral Reef Action Strategy” (Strategy). A copy of the Strategy and the Act can be found at: <http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov/>.

#### B. Program Priorities

Pursuant to the Act, NOAA published the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program Implementation Guidelines (Guidelines) in the Federal Register Vol. 67, No. 76, page 19396, on Friday, April 19, 2002. The Guidelines can be also found at <http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov/>.

The Guidelines provide broad eligibility criteria, pursuant to Section 6403(g) of the Act, for coral reef conservation activities, and also created the following six program categories under the Program for awarding financial assistance:

1. State and Territory Coral Reef Management;
2. State and Territory Coral Reef Ecosystem Monitoring;
3. Coral Reef Ecosystem Research;
4. General Coral Reef Conservation;
5. Projects to Improve or Amend Coral Reef Fishery Management Plans; and,
6. International Coral Reef Conservation.

From year to year, specific priorities of the above listed program categories change due to Congressional appropriations and direction, and priorities of NOAA, the Program, and the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force. As such, each of the categories listed above has a correlating subsection.

Only the International Coral Reef Program description is included in this FFO, which describes the following specific requirements and criteria: program priorities, applicant and project eligibility, funding availability, pre- and final application content and submission, pre- and final application review and selection, and award administration.

All pre- and final applications submitted pursuant to this FFO must be consistent with the requirements stated herein, the Guidelines and the Strategy. Applicants may also request copies of the Strategy from the contacts listed below. Funding is subject to the availability of Federal appropriations.

#### C. Program Authority

Authority for the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program is provided by Section 6403 (Coral Reef Conservation Program) of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. 6401 *et seq*).

## II. Award Information

#### A. Funding Availability for FY2007

NOAA announces the availability of up to \$500,000 in FY 2007 to support grants and cooperative agreements under the International Coral Reef Grant Program.

These funds will be used to support financial assistance awards under the program categories listed in section IV. Applicants that are invited to submit a final application may be requested to revise award objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to submittal of the final application. The amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and the specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD), and relevant NOAA staff.

#### B. Project/Award Period

Awards under this program will have an 18 month project period.

#### C. Type of Funding Instrument

Recipients will enter into a grant agreement with the NOAA NOS International Program Office, the office responsible for the International Coral Grant Program.

### **III. Eligibility Information**

#### A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include all international, governmental (except U.S. federal agencies), and non-governmental organizations. For specific country eligibility per category, please refer to individual category descriptions in Section V. The proposed work must be conducted at a non-U.S. site. Eligible countries are defined as follows: The Wider Caribbean includes the 37 States and territories that border the marine environment of the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean Sea, and the areas of the Atlantic Ocean adjacent thereto, and Brazil and Bermuda, but excluding areas under U.S. jurisdiction. The South Pacific Region includes South Pacific Regional Environment Program's 19 Pacific island countries and territories, including the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, but excluding U.S. territories and four developed country members. Southeast Asia Region includes Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The Western Indian Ocean Region includes Comoros, France (La Reunion), Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, the United Republic of Tanzania, and South Africa. The Red Sea Region includes five member countries of the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA): Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Yemen.

#### B. Other Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility criteria are also contingent upon whether activities undertaken with respect to the pre- and final application would be consistent with any applicable conditions or restrictions imposed by the U.S. government.

### C. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

The International Coral Grant Program is subject to the matching fund requirements described below.

As per section 6403(b)(1) of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, Federal funds for any coral conservation project funded under this Program may not exceed 50 percent of the total cost of the projects. Therefore, any coral conservation project under this program requires a 1:1 match. Matching funds must be from non-Federal sources and can include in-kind contributions and other non-cash support. Federal funds may not be considered as matching funds. Matching contributions cannot serve as match for other grants.

As per section 6403(b)(2) of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, the NOAA Administrator may waive all or part of the matching requirement if the Administrator determines that the project meets the following two requirements:

1. No reasonable means are available through which an applicant can meet the matching requirement, and
2. The probable benefit of such project outweighs the public interest in such matching requirement.

Applicants must specify in their proposal the match source and may be asked to provide letters of commitment to confirm stated match contributions. In the case of a waiver request, the applicant must provide a detailed justification explaining the need for the waiver including attempts to obtain sources of matching funds, how the benefit of the project outweighs the public interest in providing match, and any other extenuating circumstances preventing the availability of match.

Notwithstanding any other provisions herein, and in accordance with 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d), the Program shall waive any requirement for local matching funds for any project under \$200,000 (including in-kind contribution) to the governments of Insular Areas, defined as the jurisdictions of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Please Note: eligible applicants choosing to apply 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d) should note the use and amount in the matching funds section of the respective pre- and final applications.

### D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under the International Coral Reef Grant program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs".

## IV. International Coral Grant Program Description

### A. Program Objective

The purpose of the International Coral Reef Conservation Program is to support the

“National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs” which calls on the United States “... to exercise global leadership in the international arena in shaping and developing environmentally sound and comprehensive coral reef policy, strengthen international conventions and foster strategic partnerships with other countries, international organizations and institutions, the public and private sectors, and non-governmental organizations to address international threats to coral reef ecosystems.”

## B. Program Priorities

In FY 2007, the International program consists of the following four project categories:

### **1. Promote Watershed Management in the Wider Caribbean, Brazil, and**

**Bermuda:** The National Action Plan encourages the U.S. to "provide assistance in managing and conserving reef ecosystems and their watersheds." This Partnership emphasizes a cross-sectoral approach to marine resources management beginning with the upstream tributaries of the watershed and extending to the near shore marine environment, comprising coral ecosystems, including those that may be found within marine protected areas. It is intended to help implement international agreements and programs, for example, the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, The Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (the Cartagena Convention) and its three protocols (including The Protocol concerning Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities), and the International Coral Reef Initiative.

Therefore, IPO will fund activities that promote integrated watershed and coastal management practices that reduce or control runoff to near shore coral reef ecosystems, including programs that prioritize marine protected areas and the conservation of biodiversity within watershed planning and management, assess effectiveness of these management practices, engage stakeholders and government agencies in collaborative partnerships to implement these practices; and recommend a set of best management practices that can be applied to the Wider Caribbean region. All watershed sites must be identified by name and exact location. Allowable activities consist of the following:

- a. Analyses of regulatory and legislative frameworks to identify areas needing strengthening;
- b. Education and outreach to promote integrated watershed and coastal management practices;
- c. Workshops to enhance stakeholder participation and implementation of integrated watershed management;
- d. Assessments of land use impacts that threaten to degrade near-shore coral reefs and development of management practices to reduce and/or eliminate the identified threats;
- e. Demonstrations of best management practices or implementation of at least one best management practice for the agricultural sector to control nutrients, sediments and pesticides that threaten near-shore reefs.

### **2. Regional Enhancement of Marine Protected Area Management Effectiveness:**

The “National Action Plan” calls for strengthening the protection of resources within existing MPAs. NOAA has launched a strategic partnership with the World Conservation Union’s

(IUCN) World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) International to improve the management of MPAs by providing managers, planners and other decision makers with methods for assessing the effectiveness of MPA sites. For more information on this initiative, please refer to <http://effectiveMPA.noaa.gov>.

Regional is defined either as three or more sites in a single country or three or more sites between two or more countries. All sites must be identified by name and exact location.

Therefore, IPO will fund regional activities at coral MPA sites that are building an adaptive management and evaluation program and will conduct an assessment of management effectiveness, using the “How is your MPA Doing” handbook, in order to strengthen and achieve the site goals and objectives. The Management Effectiveness category will emphasize regional capacity building in the WCPA-Marine/WWF methodology.

**3. Encourage the Development of National Networks of Marine Protected Areas in the Wider Caribbean, Bermuda, Brazil, Southeast Asia, and the South Pacific:** Over the last decade increased recognition has been given to the contribution of national systems of marine protected areas (MPAs) to biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of marine resources. However, most MPAs have been developed at national or sub-national levels through myriad agencies with diverse objectives, authorities, organization structures, management approaches, and capacities. While many MPAs do well to serve local needs or national programs, they do not constitute a comprehensive national MPA network planning approach nor are they integrated with other forms of coastal governance, i.e., coastal management and fisheries management. Nor do these individual sites and programs allow for ecosystem-scale priority setting planning to ensure ecological connectivity and the most efficient and effective management of important resources. For the purpose of this funding opportunity, a MPA Network is *“A system of individual marine protected areas operating cooperatively and synergistically, at various spatial scales, and with a range of protection levels, in order to fulfill ecological aims more effectively and comprehensively than individual sites could alone. The system will also display social and economic benefits, although these may only become fully developed over long time frames.”*

Through this program, IPO will fund the implementation of national MPA network planning processes that contribute to an integrated plan for a comprehensive and effective system of MPAs, including the following activities:

- a) development and coordination of dialogues and partnerships with key agencies, academic institutions, and diverse stakeholders;
- b) syntheses of the purposes, types, resources protected, and levels of protection afforded by existing MPAs and all other relevant marine management efforts;
- c) assessments of existing legal and policy frameworks for MPAs;
- d) national and sub-national (where appropriate) syntheses of information on the distribution and status of key resources and habitats of marine ecosystems;
- e) assessments of gaps in protection for important marine areas;
- f) recommended priority areas for consideration in planning for inclusion in a national system;
- g) assessments of patterns and potential impacts of human uses in marine ecosystems; and
- h) identifying opportunities and process for engaging transboundary planning

and collaboration

Priority will be given to proposals that rely heavily on consistent, meaningful engagement of and input by diverse stakeholder interests, including indigenous groups and local communities in the planning process.

**4. Promote Regional Socio-Economic Training and Monitoring in Coral Reef Management in the Wider Caribbean, Brazil, Bermuda, the Western Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, the South Pacific, and Southeast Asia:** The “National Action Plan” highlights that the human dimension is often overlooked in developing coral reef management strategies and calls for measures to enhance understanding of stakeholder benefits and resolve important user conflicts. Recognizing the importance of the human dimension, the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN), in partnership with NOAA, World Commission on Protected Areas, and the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), published *The Socioeconomic Manual for Coral Reef Management*, a guide to conducting socioeconomic assessments of reef user groups. As follow-up, the GCRMN and NOAA are working with the WorldFish Centre, the University of West Indies, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, and the Coral Reef Degradation of the Indian Ocean, and the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA) to develop socioeconomic monitoring programs specific to Southeast Asia, the Wider Caribbean, the South Pacific, Western Indian Ocean, and Red Sea. Region-specific guidelines have been published for the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, and Western Indian Ocean. For information about the SocMon regional initiatives, please refer to the following web site:  
<http://ipo.nos.noaa.gov/socioeconomic/welcome.html>.

Under this project category, IPO will fund activities that support these regional initiatives and include both a capacity-building component (e.g. training workshop) and establishment of socioeconomic monitoring programs at three or more sites. Regional is defined either as three or more sites in a single country or three or more sites between two or more countries. All sites must be identified by name and exact location. See <http://ipo.nos.noaa.gov/coralgrants.html> for more information and for copies of the global and regional guidelines.

#### C. Award Information

##### 1. Funding Availability

Up to approximately \$500,000 may be available in FY 2007 to support grants and cooperative agreements under this program. Approximately \$75,000-\$100,000 may be allocated to each of the four project categories listed below, with the following award ranges:

- a. Watershed Management: \$30,000-\$40,000
- b. Management Effectiveness: Regional capacity building projects: up to \$80,000
- c. MPA National Networks: \$40,000-\$50,000
- d. Socio-Economic Monitoring Regional projects: \$15,000 - \$35,000

Pre- and final applications with requests over the limit of each category will not be accepted. Pre- and final applications must be submitted under only one of the above mentioned categories. Funding will be subject to the availability of federal appropriations. Support in out-years after FY 2007 is contingent upon the availability of funds. Applicants should never begin a project in expectation of funds under this program. IPO reserves the right to transfer any given proposal to another category within the International program if the proposal better addresses the criteria of another category.

## 2. Project/Award Period

Applicants may submit pre- and final applications covering a 12-to 18-month period with an anticipated start date of October 1, 2007.

## V. Project Specific Eligibility Criteria

Specific guidance for each International program project category is noted below. Failure to meet these criteria will eliminate pre-applications from the review process.

### A. Projects proposed under "**Promote Watershed Management in the Wider Caribbean, Brazil, and Bermuda**" must include:

1. Activities that support the implementation of the annexes of The Protocol concerning Pollution from Land Based Sources and Activities to the Cartagena Convention (for details, refer to <http://ipo.nos.noaa.gov/coralgrants.html>);
2. Letter of support for the proposed project from the government agency responsible for planning and development;
3. Project site that includes near shore fringing reef system (with description of project site uniqueness) that is impacted by agricultural runoff or intensive land-based development associated with tourism sector activities; project site/s must be identified by name and exact location;
4. Evidence of local stakeholder support, for example, agricultural businesses, NGOs, tourism sector, and port facilities;
5. Demonstration of local or national potential for developing enforceable policies and mechanisms for long term watershed management; and,
6. Evidence of potential organizational capacity to promote coordination of governmental agencies and stakeholder involvement.

### B. Projects proposed under "**Regional Enhancement of Marine Protected Area Management Effectiveness**" must include:



1. Regional capacity building, including a regional training workshop (for all sites or a training component at each of at least three sites) in the Management Effectiveness methodology developed by the WCPA-Marine/WWF International MPA Management Effectiveness Initiative. The approach can be found in the publication *How is Your MPA Doing? Guidebook for Evaluating Effectiveness of MPA's* posted at <http://effectiveMPA.noaa.gov>.
2. A management program in place at each of the named participating MPA sites, including a management plan, on-site staff, and infrastructure to carry out effectiveness assessments (project sites must be identified by name and exact location);
3. A comprehensive assessment at each participating MPA represented in the project, utilizing the guidebook and including use of indicators from each of the biophysical, socioeconomic and governance categories;
4. A plan to incorporate the assessment of indicators into management planning and review process at each MPA site represented in the project;
5. A plan to incorporate assessment results in adaptive management;
6. Include a letter of support for the project from each of the MPA managing authorities or site supervisors represented in the project that also demonstrates the involvement of the authority/supervisor in the project if the agency is not proposing the work.

C. Projects under “**Encourage the Development of Networks of Marine Protected Areas in the Wider Caribbean, Brazil, Bermuda, Southeast Asia, and the South Pacific**” must:

1. Demonstrate national commitment to commence development of MPA networks; and
2. Include a letter of support from each country’s government agency responsible for planning and/or management of marine protected areas.

D. Projects proposed under “**Promote Regional Socio-Economic Training and Monitoring in Coral Reef Management in the Wider Caribbean, Brazil, Bermuda, the Western Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, the South Pacific, and Southeast Asia**” must:

1. Clearly state the purpose of conducting the project, including how it will benefit reef management in the region and how the project relates to the priority activities identified by the relevant regional SocMon initiative.
2. Demonstrate collaboration with the SocMon initiative, such as a letter of support for the project from the SocMon regional lead organization;

3. Include a capacity building component (e.g. training workshop). For Southeast Asia, the capacity building must be based on SocMon Southeast Asia. Likewise, for the Caribbean (including Brazil and Bermuda) the capacity building must be based on *SocMon Caribbean* and for the Western Indian Ocean, capacity building must be based on *SocMon Western Indian Ocean*. In the Red Sea and the South Pacific, capacity building must be based on adaptations of these existing protocols and follow the guidelines in *Socioeconomic Manual for Coral Reef Management (2000)*. To view the regional *SocMon* protocols and the Manual please refer to <http://ipo.nos.noaa.gov/socioeconomic/guidelines.html>

4. Include site socioeconomic monitoring in at least three sites. In Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, and Western Indian Ocean, the monitoring programs must be based on the *SocMons*. In the Red Sea and South Pacific, the monitoring programs must be based on adaptations of these existing protocols and follow the guidelines in *Socioeconomic Manual for Coral Reef Management (2000)*. Include a plan for each site that: (a) explains the purpose of the socioeconomic monitoring in terms of how the socioeconomic results will be used to benefit reef management; (b) describes how the reef managers at the sites will be engaged in the socioeconomic monitoring to ensure the results are useful and used; and (c) states how a social scientist will be actively engaged in the project either from staff or elsewhere (e.g. sociologist, anthropologist, etc.). Results from the socioeconomic monitoring must be reported to the Global Socioeconomic Monitoring Database within six months of completion of the monitoring project.

5. Include a letter of support for the project from each of the site management authorities. Describe how the authority will be involved in the project if the agency is not proposing the work.

6. Submit data that is compatible to the Reef Base Socio-Economic Global database.

## **VI. Pre- and Final Application Submission Information**

The application process required by this FFO requires both a pre-application and final application, subject to the submission dates and times listed below.

### **A. Pre-application Submission Information**

Pre-applications may be submitted by surface mail or e-mail. Submissions by e-mail to [coral.grants@noaa.gov](mailto:coral.grants@noaa.gov) are preferred. Electronic acceptable formats are limited to Adobe Acrobat (.PDF), WordPerfect or Microsoft Word files. If submitting by surface mail, applicants are encouraged to include an electronic copy of the pre-application or final application on disk or CD. Federal financial assistance forms are not required to be submitted with the pre-application.

Paper pre-applications must be submitted to: David Kennedy, NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program Coordinator, Office of Response and Restoration, N/ORR, Room 10102, NOAA National Ocean Service, 1305 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Fax submittals will also be accepted for pre-applications (Fax: 301-713-4389).

#### B. Final Application Submission Information

Applicants who are invited to submit a final application may be required to make modifications or revisions to the project and budget narratives and must submit a Federal financial assistance award application package (federal forms described below). The applicant may submit the final application (narratives, federal forms, and supporting documentation) in one of two ways:

1) The preferred method is [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov): applicants will be strongly encouraged to submit the final applications through this secure web site and guidance will be sent to those who will be chosen to submit a final application. Applicants are encouraged to log on to this portal web site and begin a registration process at any time in preparation for this potential funding opportunity as well as other federal grant opportunities. The registration process can take 2-4 weeks.

2. By electronic mail to [scot.frew@noaa.gov](mailto:scot.frew@noaa.gov) including signed and scanned copies of all pages requiring original signatures and signed and scanned copies of original support letters.

3. If internet access is not available, send one original signed copy by surface mail to Scot Frew, NOAA/NOS International Program Office, 1315 East West Highway, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, N/IP, Room 5735, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Applicants should consider the delivery time when submitting their pre- and final applications from international or remote areas. Late applications by any method cannot be accepted under any circumstances.

The required Federal financial assistance forms to accompany the final application are SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, CD-511, CD-512, and if applicable, CD-346 and/or SF-LLL. These forms can be obtained from the NOAA grants Website at <http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~grants/pdf>. If internet access is not available, please contact: Scot Frew, NOAA/NOS International Program Office, 1315 East West Highway, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, N/IP, Room 5735, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or telephone 301-713-3078 extension 220; or fax 301-713-4263.

C. The following review and selection timetable applies to pre- and final applications:

Pre-applications due to NOAA – **Monday, November 13, 2006.**

IPO returns proposal comments to applicants - **Friday, February 2, 2007**

Final Applications due to NOAA - **Friday, March 2, 2007**

Pre- and final applications must be received by NOAA by 11:59 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time on the dates specified above. If the application is not received by NOAA by 11:59 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time on the dates specified above, the late application will not be reviewed or considered for FY 2007 funding.

## **VII. Content and Form of Pre- and Final Application Submission**

A. Each pre-application and final application submitted in response to this FFO must include a 1-page cover sheet with the following information:

1. Project title;
2. Applicant organization; nonprofit, university, government, etc;
3. Principal investigator or contact responsible for conducting the project;
4. Contact information including address, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail address;
5. Program category (International Coral Reef Conservation);
6. The **one** specific International Grant Category (Watershed, MPA Networks, etc);
7. Geographic location of the project (countries and sites);
8. Amount of grant funds requested;
9. Amount of matching funds provided; and,
10. One paragraph project summary.

B. Each pre- and final application narrative must clearly describe the proposed work in 20 pages or less, including letters of support and attachments. Font size should be 12 point. Paper pre- and final applications should not be bound or stapled, but can be bundled, for example, by rubber bands or binder clips. All pre- and final applications, letters of support and attachments must be written in the English Language and letters of support in other languages must be accompanied by translations. In addition to the cover sheet, each pre- and final application must include the following elements:

1. Description of the qualifications of the individual(s) who will conduct the project;
2. Project Description that must address the specific project category eligibility criteria described in International section V. and that must include:
  - (a) Project need;
  - (b) Objectives;
  - (c) Implementation strategy (please include methods, activities in relation to objectives;
  - (d) A task timetable with interim benchmarks linked to clearly defined work projects or objectives;
  - (e) Identification of how project fits into applicant and government strategy for site management;

(f) A table with a column for project outcomes and another column for their corresponding products;

(g) Partner justification and roles;

(h) A methodology to evaluate the success of the project;

(i) A Budget narrative that includes a detailed breakdown and justification of costs following the categories on the Federal Form 424A for both the Federal and non-Federal shares as they relate to specific aspects of the project. The federal forms do not have to be included in the pre-application. The forms can be downloaded from:  
<http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~grants/pdf>

(j) Intended sources of matching funds and whether they have been secured must be stated in the pre- and final application. The pre- and final application must also state whether the project has been submitted for funding consideration elsewhere. Applicants whose pre-applications are recommended for funding will be required to submit with the final application, letter(s) of commitment to fund from the organization(s) providing matching funds.

3. Evidence of support for the project from the local management authority where the work is conducted at specific sites must indicate that the project supports local management objectives. In those cases where training is proposed, indication that participants will apply these techniques at their local sites is requested. Please include evidence of coordination with relevant national and regional project partners, including a list of agencies consulted in developing the proposal and assurances that any necessary permits will be secured prior to the use of U.S. Federal funds.

4. A copy of the applicant's federal negotiated indirect cost agreement, if applicable. If the applicant currently has a negotiated indirect cost rate with the Federal Government, up to 25% of the total indirect costs can be included in the budget supported by federal funds. Indirect costs are overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., lights, rent, water, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified specifically within a particular project.

## **VIII. Pre- and Final Application Review Information**

### **A. Evaluation Criteria**

Once a pre-application has been received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application.

IPO will provide for a merit-based peer review and standardized documentation of that review for proposals that meet the eligibility requirements. Each pre-application will be reviewed by a minimum of three individuals with knowledge of the subject of the proposal. Each reviewer will submit a separate and individual review and reviewers will not provide a consensus opinion. The identities of the peer reviewers will be kept anonymous to the degree permitted by law. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and rank proposals using the evaluation criteria provided below. The merit reviewers' ratings are used to produce a rank order of the proposals.

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (25%): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For this competition, the proposal should demonstrate the need for the proposed coral reef management activity to fill gaps in the jurisdiction.

2. Technical/scientific merit (25%): This assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives for this management activity.

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (20%): This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For this competition, the proposal should demonstrate coordination with applicable ongoing local, state, territorial, and Federal coral reef management activities;

4. Project costs (20%): The Budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For this competition, the budget should reflect the ability of the work to be completed for the funding and timing proposed.

5. Outreach and education (10%): NOAA assesses whether this project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources.

NOAA may also request and consider written comments on proposed projects from agencies with jurisdiction over coral reef ecosystems in the area where the project is to be conducted, as described in Section X(1) of the Guidelines. Under the international grant program, NOAA may request and consider written comments on the proposal from relevant U.S. government agencies such as the Agency for International Development and Department of the Interior; foreign governments and their coral management agencies; and other international entities as necessary. Each entity will be provided 21 days to review and comment on subject proposals. Comments submitted will be part of the public record.

## B. Review and Selection Process

IPO will review the pre- and final applications, consistent with the equally weighted criteria listed in Section X(3) of the 2002 Coral Reef Conservation Program Implementation Guidelines in the Federal Register Vol. 67, No. 76, page 19396, on Friday, April 19, 2002. The Guidelines can be also found at <http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov/grants.html#documents>. IPO will take into consideration comments received from peer, agency, and jurisdiction reviewers.

Based on these reviews, IPO will rank order the pre-applications, and provide preliminary funding recommendations and summary comments on each proposal to those applicants selected for the final application process. These comments will include input from peer reviewers, agencies, jurisdictions, and IPO, and are intended to be used in the applicant's development of the final proposal. Upon receipt of the final application, complete with the requisite Federal forms, IPO will review the complete package and make final funding recommendations based on the incorporation of, and response to, comments that were returned to the applicant. IPO will submit these funding recommendations to the NOAA review panel for final review, pursuant to Section X(4) of the Guidelines to ensure that the Coral Reef Conservation Act requirements for geographic funding distribution and consistency with the overall program goals outlined in the Strategy. In making the final selections, the Selecting Official will identify final applications in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be invited out of rank order based upon one or more of the selection factors listed below. The Program Officials and/or Selecting Official reserve the right to reduce funding requested amounts. The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for award to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate the funds.

#### C. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

On Friday, February 2, 2007, IPO will invite selected pre-applicants to submit a final application by Friday, March 2, 2007. This notification may include a request to make modifications or revisions to the project proposal and budget narratives. Subject to the availability of funds, final funding selection will be made and selected recipients notified on or before September 30, 2007. NOAA intends to provide funding to selected applicants no later than September 30, 2007. Projects should not be initiated in expectation of Federal funding until a notice of award document is received from the NOAA Grants Officer at the NOAA Grants Management Division. Publication of this document does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or obligate all or any part of the available funds.

#### D. Selection Factors for Projects

In addition to the to equally weighted criteria described in Section X(3) of the Guidelines and comments received from peer reviewers, the following selection factors will be used:

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
  - a. Geographically
  - b. By type of institutions
  - c. By type of partners
  - d. By research areas
  - e. By project types
3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors
5. Applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups

The Program Officer and/or Selecting Official may negotiate the funding level of the proposal. The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for award to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate the funds. If insufficient eligible projects are received, NOAA may reallocate residual funds from this program area to a different funding category under the Program.

## **IX. Award Administration Information**

### **A. Award Notice**

The NOAA Grants Officer will provide the final written notice of the award by postal mail to the appropriate business office of the recipient. Unsuccessful pre- and final applications will be destroyed and not returned to the applicant. It is the goal of the NOAA Program Officer to also provide written notice to each unsuccessful applicant before September 30, 2007.

### **B. National Environmental Policy Act**

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals that are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, [http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216\\_6\\_TOC.pdf](http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6_TOC.pdf), and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, [http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc\\_ceq.htm](http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm)). Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems).

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an application.

### **C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

**Indirect Costs:** The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the Federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., utilities, rent, and insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. For this solicitation, the Federal share of the indirect costs awarded will not exceed the lesser of either the indirect costs that the applicant would be entitled to if the



negotiated Federal indirect cost rate were used or 25 percent of the Federal direct costs proposed. For those situations in which the use of the applicant's indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs greater than 25 percent of the Federal direct costs proposed, the difference may be counted as part of the non-Federal share. A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the Federal Government must be included with the pre- and final application. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

If an application is selected for funding, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional prospective funding in connection with that award in subsequent years. Any subsequent proposal to continue work on an existing project must be submitted to the competitive process for consideration and will not receive preferential treatment. Renewal of an award to increase funding or to extend the period of performance is at the total discretion of NOAA.

The recipients must comply with Executive Order 12906 regarding any and all geospatial data collected or produced under grants or cooperative agreements. This includes documenting all geospatial data in accordance with the Federal Geographic Data Committee Content Standard for digital geospatial data.

The Program uses only the existing NOAA Federal financial assistance awards package requirements per 15 CFR parts 14 and 24.

Executive Order 12866 - This action has been determined to be "not significant" for purposes of Executive Order 12866, Regulatory Planning and Review."

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with a collection-of-information, subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. 3501 et seq., unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number. Forms SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, and SF-LLL and CD-346 have been approved by OMB under the respective control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040, 0348-0046 and 0605-0001, respectively.

This notice also contains a collection-of-information requirement subject the Paperwork Reduction Act and which has been approved by OMB under control number 0648-0448. The public reporting burden is estimated to average one hour per response for comments on a proposed project from each agency with jurisdiction over coral reef ecosystems in the area where the project is to be conducted and one hour per response for a request for a waiver of matching funds. This estimate includes the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate, or any other aspect of these data collections, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to the NOAA Office of Response and Restoration, N/ORR, National Ocean Service, 1305 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Notice and Comment are not required under 5 U.S.C. 553(a)(2), or any other law, for

rules relating to public property, loans, grants, benefits or contract. Because notice and comment are not required, a regulatory flexibility analysis is not required and has not been prepared for this notice 5 U.S.C. 601 et seq.

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the Federal Register notice published on October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109), are applicable to this solicitation.

**Limitation of Liability:** In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

#### **D. Reporting**

**Performance and Financial Reports -** Recipients receiving funding will be required to submit semiannual performance reports and copies of all products that are developed under the award. The specific information, products, or data contained in the performance report can be determined by the NOAA office responsible for the program and applicant in pre-award negotiations or, the recipient will submit performance reports according to the Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. Performance reports must be submitted to the NOAA office responsible for the program within 30 days after each semi-annual performance period.

Unless otherwise authorized, semi-annual financial reports will be submitted in accordance with the Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions to the Grants Officer at NOAA Grants Management Division.

#### **X. Agency Contact(s)**

Technical point of contact for International Coral Reef Conservation is Scot Frew, NOAA/NOS International Program Office, 301-713- 3078, extension 220 or e-mail at [scot.frew@noaa.gov](mailto:scot.frew@noaa.gov).